

# CONNECTIONS

January 2007

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RESEARCH & ANALYSIS BUREAU  
WORKFORCE SERVICES DIVISION  
MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & INDUSTRY

## MCRN's Newest Career Resource - MCIS Junior!

If you're looking for a fun, engaging activity full of great career information for middle school students, MCRN's newest resource is ready to meet your needs. MCIS Junior is an internet-based career information system developed specifically for middle school students who are becoming aware of career choices and planning for high school. MCIS Junior offers activities and resources to help students build their education plans. MCIS Junior includes occupational information, career cluster information, portfolios to save information, high school course plans, a glossary of career-related terminology, an interest survey, and fun activities and worksheets to help students identify their personal and work preferences.

MCIS Junior is presented in four major components:

**Getting Started, Career Clusters, My Portfolio, and the Interest Survey.**

**My Portfolio** provides students a place to save their survey results and info on their favorite occupations, and to build their educational plans for high school and beyond. MCIS Junior's portfolio can follow the student to high school through MCIS, growing with the student.

**Getting Started** contains activities and worksheets addressing the career development exploration process: *What do I need to know about myself? What do I need to know about the world of work? And When should I make plans for my education?*

*What do I need to know about myself?* targets six areas for students to learn about themselves: My Dreams, Who Am I?, What Are My Interests?, What Are My Skills?, What Are My Preferences?, and Thinking About Me. The activities ask students to document their dreams for the future,

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## **MCIS Junior** (*continued from page 1*)

gather words that describe them, discover interest areas, identify skills and preferences, and compile all the information into a meaningful document. The compilation activity brings together the special qualities students know about themselves, and provides the foundation for developing of their educational plan.

***What do I need to know about the world of work?*** teaches students about different career opportunities, and how they relate to their educational options. With this knowledge, students can begin to set goals. They will first evaluate their options using the self-knowledge they have gained from the previous activities. Then they will research and prioritize occupations to build an educational plan, and create specific goals (personal, career, and educational).

***When should I make plans for my education?*** shows students how the connection between education and their goals, and leads students through the process of high school course planning. The activities involve further research in MCIS Junior's Career Clusters and occupational information. Students learn about high school graduation and college entrance requirements, as well as occupational education requirements.

MCIS Junior then helps students translate these requirements into a year-by-year high school course plan, which the student can continue to build upon during high school, using MCIS.

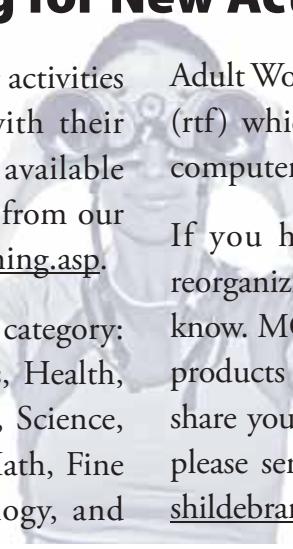
The **Career Clusters** component provides information on occupations, using the U.S. Department of Education's sixteen Career Clusters as a framework. The component offers, in a clear and concise format, information on skills and abilities, preparation, wages, high school courses, advancement opportunities, educational requirements, job projections, and working conditions. Students can also access real world interviews and video clips to help them build career plans.

MCIS Junior also offers an **Interest Survey** to help students narrow their options. The survey asks students to rate 80 activities based on how much they would enjoy doing them. Most activities are things middle school students have done before. The results are provided in a graph of the sixteen Career Clusters. Students can select a cluster from the graph and learn more about occupations in that cluster. Narrowing their choices helps students explore occupations without becoming overwhelmed.

## **Looking for New Activities?**

MCRN provides 500 practical learning activities for teachers and counselors to use with their students. The learning activities are available free of charge and can be downloaded from our website: [mcis.dli.mt.gov/practical\\_learning.asp](http://mcis.dli.mt.gov/practical_learning.asp).

The learning activities are grouped by category: Foreign Language, Global Perspectives, Health, Language Arts, Varied Learning Styles, Science, Business/Economics, Social Studies, Math, Fine Arts, Technology, Industrial Technology, and



Adult Workshops. The files are in rich text format (rtf) which allows you to save the file to your computer and edit it easily in Microsoft Word.

If you have suggestions for improvement, reorganizing, or other comments, please let us know. MCRN is always looking to improve our products and resources. If you would like to share your learning activities for others to use, please send them to Shaunda Hildebrand at [shildebrand@mt.gov](mailto:shildebrand@mt.gov) or call (800) 541-3904.

# MCRN By Grade Level

Have you ever wondered what MCRN has to offer for your grade level? Well, MCRN is working to make that easy for you. MCRN's website will be updated to allow users to look for resources by their target audience: elementary, middle school, high school, parents, or adult. The following is a break out of what MCRN offers:

## Elementary

- Jacob & Emily Skip School: A Career Clusters Workbook and Teacher's Guide (5th-6th grade)
- The Play Real Game (3rd-4th grade)
- The Make It Real Game (5th-6th grade)
- Practical Learning Activities

## Parents

- ACRN Parent Guides and resources
- MCIS
- Construct My Future (for parents)
- Other helpful links to resources for parents

## Middle School

- The Real Game (7th-8th grade)
- MCIS Junior
- Practical Learning Activities
- Montana Career Guide
- Career Trek (7th-8th grade)

## Adults

- MCIS
- Montana Career Guide
- Experience Wanted: An Employment Guide for Montana Seniors
- Job Hunting Guide for Montanan's with Disabilities
- Inside Edition: A Job Hunting Guide for Montanans with Criminal Records
- Real Times/Real Life

## High School

- Who Needs Math & Science? (This publication is being reworked to include math and science exercises tied to occupations)
- Montana Career Guide
- MCIS
- The Be Real Game (9th-10th grade)
- The Get Real Game (11th-12th grade)

- Construct My Future
- Career Profiles
- Practical Learning Activities
- Academic Practice Tests
- Civil Service Practice Tests
- Dependable Strengths
- IDEAS Assessment

## **What is “Dependable Strengths”?**

Dependable Strengths is a planned sequence of experiences in which participants identify their strengths and talents, uncover hidden potential, and become motivated to strive for success. Dependable Strengths is a unique research-based process proven to increase self-esteem, motivation, and interest in learning.

Dependable Strengths began in 1945 to help military personnel transition their skills to civilian life.

Its overwhelming success in this area won the attention of the Harvard Business School, where it went on to become a significant part of its Manual for Alumni Placement. Today, Dependable Strengths can be found in use throughout the world.

In 1993, Washington State earned the Council of State Governments Award for VOTE (Vocational Opportunities Training & Education), an innovative program for recovering drug and alcohol addicts, which included Dependable Strengths as a key component. Of the 3,000 participants surveyed: 84% completed the program; 78% were employed

or in training within 8 weeks; 68% were in the same jobs 1 year later; and 44% were earning more than participants in comparison programs.



A study in 1991 at the University of Washington, Seattle demonstrated that people who participated in the Dependable Strengths program significantly increased their self-esteem, motivation to achieve, internal locus of control, mental health, and self-efficacy.

MCRN provides Dependable Strengths through MCIS for \$200 per site (unlimited usage per site). Dependable Strengths in MCIS still requires teacher intervention and group activities, but greatly simplifies the process for the participant and teacher. For more information or to try a demo of Dependable Strengths, contact Shaunda Hildebrand at (800) 541-3904.

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## **MCRN Goes To The Legislature**

Historically, MCRN has been funded through Section 118 of the Carl Perkins Act. While the Perkins Act was reauthorized by Congress and Section 118 was included and the language even strengthened, Congress did not fund it. Federal funding for MCRN's activities ended June 30th, 2006. The Montana Department of Labor and

Industry (DLI), seeing the value of MCRN's products and resources, agreed to provide funding through June 30th, 2007. In order to keep the program alive and functioning, MCRN, with DLI and Governor's support, has put a request before the legislature to fund MCRN.

# MCRN Academic and Civil Service Practice Tests



You've heard the old saying: "Practice makes perfect." Well, the academic practice tests MCRN offers may not make a student's test scores *perfect*, but they can help to improve them. Studies show that students who practice for academic tests raise their scores, on average, by 20%. That could make the difference between being accepted at the student's first choice school, or settling for a backup choice. MCRN offers not only SAT and ACT practice tests, but practice tests for ASVAB, CLEP, PSAT, GED, and Civil Service.

Practice tests don't just raise test scores, they also raise student self-esteem and lower test time stress. Students learn to pace themselves, how to answer questions, refresh their knowledge, and find areas needing improvement. This can be invaluable to a student.

MCRN offers, through Peterson's, two to three full-length practice tests of each type, detailed answer explanations for every question, tips and hints to boost performance on test day, realistic content and difficulty, timed exams for pacing, and an automatic bookmark feature so students can return to partially completed tests and pick up where they left off.

Academic practice tests are priced based on school size, ranging from \$225 to \$325. Civil service practice tests cost \$200 per school, or \$225 for an agency. Please contact Shaunda Hildebrand at (800) 541-3904 to purchase a practice test package, or to demo the practice tests for yourself.

## New and Updated MCRN Products and Resources

MCRN is always working on updating and creating new resources to address Montana's career development needs. Over the next couple of months MCRN will be reworking the *Who Needs Math & Science?* publication to include relevant math and science exercises for students. MCRN will also be updating

our website to continually improve its usability; we will be updating the *Job Hunting Guide for Montanans with Disabilities* to reflect the latest program changes and additions; and we will continue to create new and innovative resources for students, job seekers, teachers, counselors, and the public.

# S STUDENT ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION

## A Continuing Partnership

By Clay Hanson, Community Outreach Manager, [chanson@safmt.org](mailto:chanson@safmt.org), 406-495-7760

**S**tudent Assistance Foundation's goal is for Montana to be a state where higher education is within reach of all Montanans, no matter their economic status. This goal will be achieved when all Montanans know about and use the wide range of options available for college, trade school, technical school and more. Montana Career Information System (MCIS) is an option that combines interest profilers, programs of study and information on a variety of occupations in one place. MCIS can level the playing field for all Montanans who dream of higher education.

### A new MCIS brochure is now available

**T**hose of you who are familiar with the MCIS workbook know it is an in-depth book that takes users through all the ins and outs of MCIS. Though this is nice to have, it can be overwhelming to someone who has never been on MCIS before. Now there is another option - the "MCIS at a Glance" brochure. This new brochure is designed to familiarize people with MCIS quickly and cover the basics. To request free copies of the brochure, contact Clay Hanson at: [chanson@safmt.org](mailto:chanson@safmt.org).



### ACT & SAT Test Prep

**A** brand new resource is available to high school students across Montana. Now, students who have their sights set on higher education can use Peterson's ACT and SAT practice tests free of charge! These resources can be accessed quickly and easily at [www.safmt.org](http://www.safmt.org). After creating a login, users have full access to three versions of each test. Each test is broken up into a series of timed sections designed to mimic the actual test. It takes between 10 and 60 minutes to complete each section, but users have the option to pause while taking the test and come back to it later. (Users should remember they can't stop half way through a section on the real test.) After completing a section, answers can be reviewed to see what was right and what was wrong. Once the test is completed, scores are displayed to help identify areas that need improvement.

Using the practice tests in conjunction with MCIS can greatly help in the college application process. When looking at a school on MCIS, users can compare their test scores with the average test scores for students at that school by clicking on the "Admission Requirements" section. Users can then determine if more studying is needed or if they are ready to jump into that dream school.

## College Goal Sunday

**S**tudent Assistance Foundation, Montana financial aid officers and volunteers from around the state are primed and ready to help students and their families fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at 17 College Goal Sunday locations across Montana on Feb. 11.

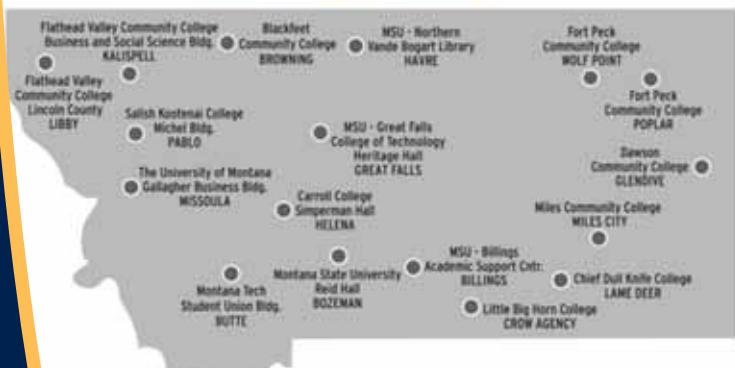


At this free event, students can enter to win a \$500 scholarship that may be used at any accredited college or program in the nation. At least one scholarship will be awarded at each Montana College Goal Sunday location.

Participants should bring the following to the event:

- Social Security numbers, both student and parent
- 2006 Federal Tax Returns, both student and parent, or 2005 Federal Tax Returns if the 2006 documents aren't complete
- W2s and information about other sources of income such as tribal income, child support, investments and more
- FAFSA pin numbers, both student and parent. (These can be obtained at [www.pin.ed.gov](http://www.pin.ed.gov).)

This year, each Montana College Goal Sunday location has three sessions to choose from: 1 p.m., 2 p.m. or 3 p.m. Reservations are not required. Visit [www.collegegoalmt.org](http://www.collegegoalmt.org) to learn more.

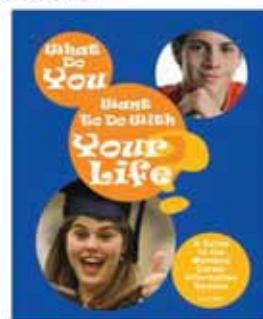


## College Goal Sunday Car Raffle Fundraiser

**S**tudent Assistance Foundation is raffling off a brand new 2006 Subaru Outback to help raise money for the continuation of the College Goal Sunday grant program in Montana. High school and college groups from around the state are selling tickets from Oct. 15, 2006 to Jan. 31, 2007. A portion of the sales - \$1 from every \$5 ticket sold - is returned to each group for their own educational fundraising endeavors. The winner will be announced on College Goal Sunday. Visit [www.collegegoalmt.org](http://www.collegegoalmt.org) to learn more.

## Ordering the MCIS Workbook

**T**he great part about the MCIS workbooks is they are free! Anyone interested in ordering a quantity of MCIS workbooks should e-mail their requests to [mcis@safmt.org](mailto:mcis@safmt.org). Be sure to include the school name, the requestor's name, shipping address, city, zip code and amount.



## Accessing MCIS at home

**U**sers, go to [www.safmt.org](http://www.safmt.org) and click on the "Start Planning Your Future with MCIS" button in the right hand side of the page. This will take users to the sign-in page where they can create a user name and password. *This information will not be sold or distributed to any other organizations. User privacy is very important to us.* Once user names and passwords are established, users can access MCIS through [www.safmt.org](http://www.safmt.org) at any computer with an Internet connection.

# We Need Your Help!

## Please Participate in the MCIS Survey



Montana students and job seekers deserve the best career information possible in a format that is easily usable and understandable. That is why we are asking for your help. We need your experience and input to continually improve MCIS in order to meet the needs of students and job seekers.

Please take a moment to complete our short online survey at [www.ourfactstyourfuture.org](http://www.ourfactstyourfuture.org). Click the "MCIS Survey" link to take the survey. You will be able to see summary results once you've completed the survey.

Shaunda (the nice lady on the wanted poster), and all of us at MCRN, thank you in advance for your help.

**Montana Career Resource Network - P.O. Box 1728 - Helena MT 59624-1728**  
**Phone: (406) 444-3239 or Toll-free: (800) 541-3904 - [www.ourfactstyourfuture.org](http://www.ourfactstyourfuture.org)**

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